

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2023

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Alberto Ángel Fernández Pérez of Argentina and an Exchange With Reporters
March 29, 2023

President Biden. Well, Mr. President, welcome. Welcome. It's great to see you. Welcome to the White House. This meeting has been a long time coming. We had to cancel this past summer because I got COVID, but I'm delighted to see you here.

You know, we're 200 years—200 years we've had diplomatic relations. And——

[At this point, the interpreter began to translate President Biden's remarks into Spanish.]

President Biden. Are you translating that, or——

[The interpreter concluded the translation, and President Biden resumed his remarks as follows.]

And today we embark on the next century of our partnership. This meeting is a chance to reaffirm that nothing is beyond our reach if we work together. And thank you for participating in our second Summit on Democracy earlier today. Together we're working to protect human rights and ensure democracy delivers for all of our people.

And, together, we said this—we intend to stand up for our democracies and what we value. And particularly at the United Nations, I want to thank you and your Government for your—the way in which you're handling the invasion of Ukraine unjustly by the Russians.

And I think we have an enormous opportunity to increase our economic interchange, our economic integration, on everything from clean energy to critical minerals to technology to security. We're about to set on—out on the next century. So let's have a good meeting because there's a lot we can cooperate on. Again, welcome.

President Fernández. Thank you, *Presidente*. Thank you, President.

President Biden. Please.

President Fernández. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

Indeed, here we are in Washington. It's not the first time we've met. We've already had the chance to meet. I think this is our third or fourth time. Well, actually, it was the G–7, the Summit of the Americas, among other occasions. But today we'll be able to specifically talk about Argentina and the United States.

I think we have a great opportunity ahead of us after 200 years of diplomatic relations between us. In the last couple of years, we've had to deal with a terrible scourge, which was the COVID–19 pandemic. And I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for your support, not just for Argentina, but also for our continent, by supplying vaccines, which were very useful in fighting the virus.

More than once, we've had an opportunity to talk about the economic problems that Argentina faces and which I inherited as a President. The international context is not helping. And I would also like to thank you for that because your administration has also consistently supported us in the context of international financial institutions.

We see the serious problem that the Russian invasion of Ukraine has created. As you rightly pointed out, we have supported the U.N. position in condemning the invasion. The war has

brought terrible damage to the world economy. We need to work a lot together for that war to end, for no more human lives to be lost, and for the global economy to recover as well. When the FAO says that over 300 million people may be suffering from hunger as a result of the war, we see how urgent peace is, and we need to do everything we can and work together to make sure that we can make this end.

I think that both the administration of President Biden and our own see democracy and human rights as central pillars for development, and we must continue to work in that direction. I also believe that, as countries, we have a great opportunity ahead of us. The world is demanding food, it is demanding energy, and we have all those resources, and we can produce them in our countries.

You may recall my address at the Americas Summit, and I talked about the importance of bringing together the north, the central part, and the south of the Americas so that we can all work on producing and developing food for all of humanity. And that is still one of my aspirations, which I hope we'll be able to achieve.

We also share a concern with regard to climate change. Argentina, you may know, is going through the worst drought on record since 1929, which has very much complicated our economy. And this situation is something that we are discussing with the financial institutions. So we certainly do look forward to your continued support, the way we have had it so far.

And one last thing I would like to say to you, Mr. President: Upon my arrival in Washington, DC, I saw the flags at half-mast, and I learned about the Nashville tragedy. I would like to convey my solidarity and sympathy to the families of the victims. But I would like to publicly state my support for your initiative to regulate the sale of firearms in the United States.

This idea, which you are spearheading, represents a problem that the world suffers. In my country, some are suggesting that arms should be sold freely in order to—for people to protect themselves. So I deeply value your initiative, and you can count on me as an unreserved partner.

President Biden. Well, thank you. And thank you for expressing your concern and sympathy. As a matter of fact, as I speak now, my wife is down at that school, meeting with the families to bring our sense of concern. And so it's very difficult. Losing a child is hard.

But thank you. Thank you.

[President Biden addressed the press as follows.]

Don't get hurt leaving, please. *[Laughter]*

[Several reporters began asking questions at once.]

Pope Francis

Q. Any comment on Pope Francis, Mr. President? The Pope is in the hospital.

President Biden. I just learned.

Q. What's that?

President Biden. I just learned that 5 minutes ago.

Q. Are you concerned?

President Biden. Yes. He's a good friend.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:55 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. President Fernández spoke in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Categories: Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters, White House; Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : Argentina, President Fernández.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Biden, Jill T.; Fernández Pérez, Alberto Ángel; Francis, Pope.

Subjects: Argentina, President; Argentina, relations with U.S.; Holy See (Vatican City), Pope; Russia, conflict in Ukraine; Summit for Democracy; Tennessee, shooting in Nashville; Ukraine, Russian invasion and airstrikes.

DCPD Number: DCPD202300243.